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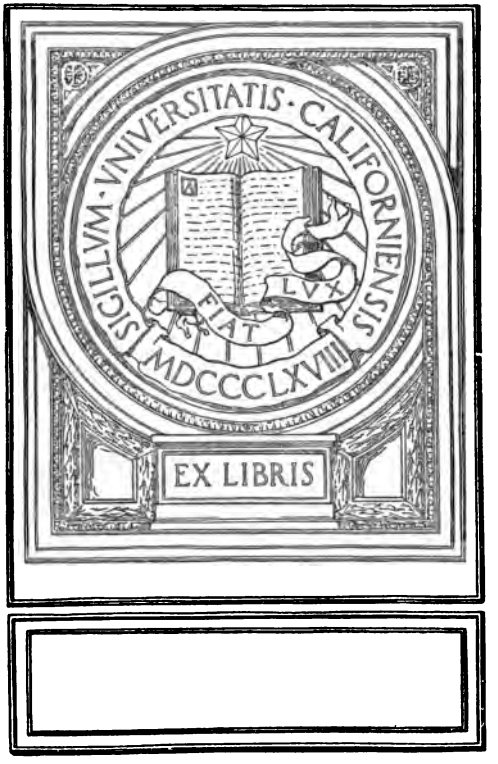
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Idle Idyls



Carolyn Wells


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To OLIVER HERFORD
GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER, & FRIEND

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IDLE IDYLS

"I AM nae Poet, in a sense,
But just a Rhymer, like, by chance,
An' hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her."

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IDLE IDYLS

THE SPELLING LESSON

WHEN Venus said: "Spell *no* for me,"
"N–O," Dan Cupid wrote with glee,
And smiled at his success;
"Ah, child," said Venus, laughing low,
"We women do not spell it so,
We spell it Y–E–S."

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A WARNING

OH, you Summer Girl!
You ridiculous, absurd, hackneyed, overworked, adorable Summer Girl!
You shirt-waisted goddess
And sailor-hatted sylph,
You picturesque potpourri of outing effects,
You think you 're great,
Don't you?
And you are.
You 're a power, and a queen, and a tyrant.
And you know it,
And you glory in it.
And I don't blame you.
I think you 're all right myself.
But —
Although you rule your young men,
Your swains and gallants and cavaliers —
Although you think
All mankind bow beneath your sway,
It is n't true.
I defy you!

II

I am your lord and master, and of me you are
afraid;
Abjectly, shrinkingly, and shudderingly afraid.
Who am I?
I am Time, Father Time; your friend and ally
now.
But remember,
I have you in my power,
Irrevocably in my power,
And at my will I can transform you into a crone,
An old, wrinkled, haggard, toothless crone.
But I won't do it — at least, not now.
For a few years I will let you defy me.
You may misuse me, waste me, and even try to kill
me,
And I will only serve you faithfully in return,
And bring you triumphs and happinesses.
But some day
I will steal your treasures —
Your bewitching gowns,
And coquettish hats.
Yes, and I will steal
The roses from your cheeks
And the sparkle from your eyes.
And then, milady,

What will you do?
But meanwhile, Summer Girl,
Have all the fun you can.
And now,
Run away and play.

SIGHTED

ST. VALENTINE'S ship comes sailing
Across the Sea of Dreams;
Roses hang from the railing,
The golden pennant gleams.

Blown by the winds of Fancy,
Careless of maps or charts;
Steered by Love's necromancy,
And ballasted with hearts.

Across the space between us
She glides on even keel;
Her figurehead 's a Venus,
And Cupid 's at the wheel.

The turtle-doves are swinging
In wreaths hung from the bow;
Youth at the helm is singing,
And Pleasure at the prow.

Freighted with fair Romances,
 Love-knots and ribbons blue;
As nearer she advances
 I hear the ringdoves coo.

Ho! maidens, all be merry,
 And, gallants, pay your court;
Fourteenth of February
 She will arrive in port.

TIT FOR TAT

SECURE from observation,
A Bookworm made his home
And pursued his occupation
In a dry and dusty tome,

Made by some wise old sages
That lesser minds might learn.
The Bookworm turned the pages
(For even a worm will turn).

He said, "What prosy leaders!
And, judging by its look,
This book has bored its readers,
Now I will bore the book."

TO OMAR

OMAR KHAYYÁM, you 're a jolly old Aryan,
Half sybaritic and semi-barbarbian,
Not a bit mystic, but utilitarian,
Fond of a posy and fond of a dram.
Symbolist, poet, and clear-eyed philosopher,
Had you a wife I am sure you were boss of her,
Yet you 'd be ruled by the coquettish toss of her
Garland-crowned head at you, Omar Khayyám.
For there is vanity
In your humanity,
Else your urbanity
Were but a flam;
And the severity
Of your austerity
Proves your sincerity,
Omar Khayyám.

Well I remember when first you were heralded,
Persian-born poesy ably Fitzgeralded;
Impulse said buy you — and I to my peril did:
Now a meek slave to your genius I am.

Some of your doctrines to us may seem hatable,
Though we admit that the themes are debatable;
But your ideas, are they really translatable
Into our languages, Omar Khayyám?
In your society
All inebriety
Seems but propriety,
Truth but a sham;
And the reality
Of your carnality
Courts immortality,
Omar Khayyám.

From the grave depths of your massive tranquillity
Thoughts you produce, knowing well their futility,
Thoughts that you phrase with a fatal facility,—
Hurl with the force of a battering-ram!
But we care not though your message be cynical,
Not very creedal, and scarcely rabbinical,
We, your adorers, put you on a pinnacle,
For that we love you, old Omar Khayyâm.
Though you 're erroneous,
Still you 're harmonious,
And you 're euphonious

In epigram.
O'er the censorious
You are victorious;
We hold you glorious,
Omar Khayyám.

TO A MILKMAID

I HAIL thee, O milkmaid!
Goddess of the gaudy morn, hail!
Across the mead tripping,
Invariably across the mead tripping,
The merry mead with cowslips blooming,
With daisies blooming,
The milkmaid also more or less blooming!
I hail thee, O milkmaid!
I recognise the value of thy pail in literature and art.
What were a pastoral poet without thee?
Oh, I know thee, milkmaid!
I hail thy jaunty juvenescence.
I know thy eighteen summers and thy eternal springs.
Ay, I know thy trials!
I know how thou art outspread over pastoral poetry.
Rampant, ubiquitous, inevitable, thy riotings in pastoral poetry,
And in masterpieces of pastoral art!
How oft have I seen thee sitting;
On a tri-legged stool sitting;
On the wrong side of the cow sitting;

Garbed in all thy preposterous paraphernalia.
I know thy paraphernalia —
Yea, even thy impossible milkpail and thy improbable
bodice.
Short-skirted siren!
Big-hatted beauty!
What were the gentle spring without thee?
I hail thee!
I hail thy vernality, and I rejoice in thy hackneyed
ubiquitousness.
I hail the superiority of thy inferiorness, and
I lay at thy feet this garland of gratuitous
Hails!





AN ARTISTIC EVENING

A TURNER sunset flickered on the madly-scarlet hills,
And the valley had a Wordsworth atmosphere;
The babbling little brooklet ran in Tennysonian rills,
And a Rosa Bonheur cow was grazing near.

A crescent moon was floating on the Vereshchagin sky,
The heavens were with Ruskin clouds o'erspread;
A lanky Burne-Jones maiden, with a halo, wandered by,
While a Millet rustic stood and hung his head.

The primrose at the old stand blossomed by the river's brim,
A nightingale or two began to sing,
And Bouguereau's Bather murmured, as she went to take her swim:
"I think that we shall have a Corot Spring."

A SECRET WOE

A GIBSON Girl was hanging in a frame upon my wall;
She was exceeding graceful and she was exceeding tall.
I suppose I must have dreamed it, though I thought I was awake,
But that Gibson maiden softly sighed, and then she softly spake.
Her voice was low and lovely, her diction was correct,
Her language such as from a Gibson Girl one might expect;
But she seemed a bit unhappy, and a tear was in her eye,
So I sympathetically begged that she would tell me why.
She smiled a little sadly, and in a wistful tone
She rather intimated she had troubles of her own.
Then she folded her long Gibson arms and shook her Gibson head,
Tossed back her wavy Gibson hair, and this is what she said:

"I know that I am stunning, I know I 'm *chic* and swell;
My costumes are perfection, and I pose extremely well.
I can play at golf or tennis, I can skate or swim or ride;
I 've been admired in every rôle from débutante to bride.
I look charming in a shirt waist, and I 'm given every chance
To display my Gibson shoulders at a dinner or a dance.
My features are patrician, and my figure is n't bad;
I 'm never out of drawing, and I am the present fad.
And yet — I know I 'm silly, but I 'm longing to be short —
A little doll-faced girlie of the airy, fairy sort.
To be caressed and petted, called Bébé and Petite;
To be told that I have tiny hands and Cinderella feet;
To be shielded and protected lest I overtax my strength;
To wear coats and skirts and dresses of an ordinary length.
And besides," — her sweet voice faltered, and her Gibson eyelids drooped,
And round her fingers nervously her handkerchief she looped, —

"I met my fate this summer, — I did, really, — and you see
I 'm awfully in love with him, and he 's in love with me.
He 's the dearest man in all the world, but he is n't very tall,
So that 's another reason why I wish that I were small.
When I think of all my Gibson beaus of six feet, eight, or more,
I marvel that I 've given my heart to a man of five feet four."
She said no more, but silently she hung there in her place;
A Gibson impassivity stole o'er her perfect face:
And I love her and admire her as a clever work of art,
But I pity that poor Gibson Girl, because I know her heart.

THE DERELICT

UPON the sad, illusive Sea of Dreams,
A phantom barque, tossed by the billows, rides
At mercy of the shifting winds and tides;
And on its ghostly sail the moonlight gleams.
Abandoned by all mariners it seems;
No staying hand its reckless rudder guides,
Yet smoothly o'er the trackless deep it glides,
Unheeding that its course with danger teems.

Across the watery dark my way I grope,
I will adopt this derelict so fair;
I raise my flag and float my colours there—
But with its waywardness I cannot cope;
I, too, abandon it in my despair,
It is unseaworthy. Its name is Hope.

A PATIENT LOVER

MY sweetheart is a treasure
And I love her beyond measure,
And each day I have discovered some new and charming trait;
But it made me feel the saddest
When I found she was a faddist,
And that I must be neglected for caprices up to date.

At one time it was Browning,
Then, First Aid to the Drowning,
Then Trying to Discover why Cats Land on their Feet;
Then Bric-à-brac Collecting,
Then Views on Vivisecting,
Then a dainty Kind of Slumming in a very dirty Street.

Goodness knows what next it will be,
For a long time it was "Trilby,"
Until unto Napoleon she became a devotee;
Now it 's Joan of Arc and her Age;
But I try to keep up courage,
For I hope the time is coming when she 'll make a fad of me.

FATE

TWO shall be born the whole world wide apart,
And speak in different tongues, and pay their debts
In different kinds of coin; and give no heed
Each to the other's being. And know not
That each might suit the other to a T,
If they were but correctly introduced.
And these, unconsciously, shall bend their steps,
Escaping Spaniards and defying war,
Unerringly toward the same trysting-place,
Albeit they know it not. Until at last
They enter the same door, and suddenly
They meet. And ere they 've seen each other's face
They fall into each other's arms, upon
The Broadway cable car — and this is Fate!

MY CHOICE

POETS in dainty verse express
The charms of maid or lady fair;
They rhyme their praises of her dress,
Or laud the snood that binds her hair.
Sylvia's shoe 's beyond compare, —
Katherine's kirtle 's tightly laced, —
But in these themes I have no share,
I sing my Polly's pink shirt waist.

The stately ruff of good Queen Bess,
Or Cleopatra's mantle rare,
Have each a charm, I will confess, —
The peasant's garb is debonair;
The Gainsborough with its flaunting flare,
Demure Priscilla's kerchief chaste, —
None of these may my heart ensnare,
I sing my Polly's pink shirt waist.

Although the white veil seems to bless
The novice as she kneels in prayer;
Though cap and gown achieve success
In college or professor's chair;

Toilettes which 'neath the gas-light's glare
The haughty ball-room belle have graced, —
For praise of these, go, search elsewhere,
I sing my Polly's pink shirt waist.

L'ENVOI

Princess, I mind not what you wear,
Your royal robes suit not my taste;
For silks and gems I do not care,
I sing my Polly's pink shirt waist.



YES, Poet, I am coming down to earth,
To spend the merry months of blossom-time;
But don't break out in pæans of glad mirth
Expressed in hackneyed rhyme.



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TO A POET—BY SPRING

For once, dear Poet, won't you kindly skip
 Your ode of welcome? It is such a bore;
I am no chicken, and I 've made the trip
 Six thousand times or more.

And as I flutter earthward every year,
 You must admit that it grows rather stale
When I arrive, repeatedly to hear
 The same old annual "Hail!"

Time was when I enjoyed the poets' praise,
 Will Shakspere's song, or Mr. Milton's hymn;
Or even certain little twittering lays
 By ladies quaint and prim.

Chaucer and Spenser filled me with delight,—
 And how I loved to hear Bob Herrick woo!
Old Omar seemed to think I was all right,
 And Aristotle, too.

But I am sated with this fame and glory,
 Oh, Poet, leave Parnassian heights unscaled;
This time let me be spared the same old story,
 And come for once unhailed!

THE LATEST FAD

NANNETTE is just the dearest girl;
To her I vow my love and duty;
From slipper-tip to shining curl
She 's my ideal of dainty beauty.
She 's all a fiancée should be,
No words are fond enough to praise her;
But life has lost its charm for me
Since Nan became a crystal-gazer.

The passing fad of each new day
Has caught her somewhat fickle fancy;
It nearly took my breath away
When she went in for Chiromancy.
She studied Psychical Research,
And Hypnotism did n't faze her;
She even joined the Buddhist church;
But now she is a crystal-gazer.

Some of her fads I rather liked, —
Her cult of Ibsen, or of Browning,
Her swagger costume when she biked,
Her Dress Reform and Delsarte gowning;

I liked it when she tried to cook
Crabs à la Newburg in her blazer;
But life takes on a different look
Since Nan became a crystal-gazer.

Her fervid gaze she concentrates, —
That crystal ball her constant focus;
She ardently invokes the Fates
And all their mystic hocus-pocus,
With muscles tense, and head erect,
Until the gleaming crystal sways her
(I 've known it to have that effect,
Though I am not a crystal-gazer).

Of course I know it 's but a freak,
The very latest London notion;
She may forget it in a week
And find some other new devotion.
But with my heart too long she 's played, —
I wonder if it would amaze her
If I should woo another maid
While Nan remains a crystal-gazer.

THE POSTER GIRL'S DEFENCE

IT was an Artless Poster Girl pinned up against
my wall,
She was tremendous ugly, she was exceeding tall;
I was gazing at her idly, and I think I must have
slept,
For that poster maiden lifted up her poster voice, and
wept.

She said between her poster sobs, "I think it 's rather
rough
To be jeered and fleered and flouted, and I 've stood
it long enough;
I 'm tired of being quoted as a Fright and Fad and
Freak,
And I take this opportunity my poster mind to speak.

"Although my hair is carmine and my nose is edged
with blue,
Although my style is splashy and my shade effects
are few,

Although I 'm out of drawing and my back hair is
a show,
Yet I have n't half the whimseys of the maidens that
you know.

" I never keep you waiting while I prink before the
glass,
I never talk such twaddle as that little Dawson lass,
I never paint on china, nor erotic novels write,
And I never have recited ' Curfew must not ring to-
night.'

" I don't rave over Ibsen, I never, never flirt,
I never wear a shirt waist with a disconnected skirt;
I never speak in public on ' The Suffrage,' or ' The
Race,'
I never talk while playing whist, or trump my partner's
ace."

I said: " O artless Poster Girl, you 're in the right
of it,
You are a joy forever, though a thing of beauty, nit! "
And from her madder eyebrows to her utmost purple
swirl,
Against all captious critics I 'll defend the Poster Girl.

BALLADE OF OLD LOVES

WHO is it stands on the polished stair,
A merry, laughing, winsome maid,
From the Christmas rose in her golden hair
To the high-heeled slippers of spangled *suède?*
A glance, half daring and half afraid,
Gleams from her roguish eyes downcast;
Already the vision begins to fade —
'T is only a ghost of a Christmas Past.

Who is it sits in that high-backed chair,
Quaintly in ruff and patch arrayed,
With a mockery gay of a stately air
As she rustles the folds of her old brocade, —
Merriest heart at the masquerade?
Ah, but the picture is passing fast
Back to the darkness from which it strayed —
'T is only a ghost of a Christmas Past.

Who is it whirls in a ball-room's glare,
Her soft white hand on my shoulder laid,
Like a radiant lily, tall and fair,
While the violins in the corner played

The wailing strains of the Serenade?
Oh, lovely vision, too sweet to last —
E'en now my fancy it will evade —
'T is only a ghost of a Christmas Past.

L'ENVOI

Rosamond! look not so dismayed,
All of my heart, dear love, thou hast.
Jealous, belovéd? Of a shade? —
'T is only a ghost of a Christmas Past.

MAIDEN MEDITATION

(A RONDEAU)

MYRTILLA thinks! be still, oh, breeze,
Ye birds, cease warbling in the trees,
Ye wavelets, your light plash subdue,
Ye turtle-doves, neglect to coo,
And silent be, ye buzzing bees,

Lest even your soft harmonies
Intrude upon such thoughts as these,
For though astonishing, 't is true,
Myrtilla thinks!

Plunged in profoundest reveries,
Fair visions her rapt fancy sees;
So undecided what to do—
Shall she wear pink? shall she wear blue?
Amid her pretty fineries
Myrtilla thinks!

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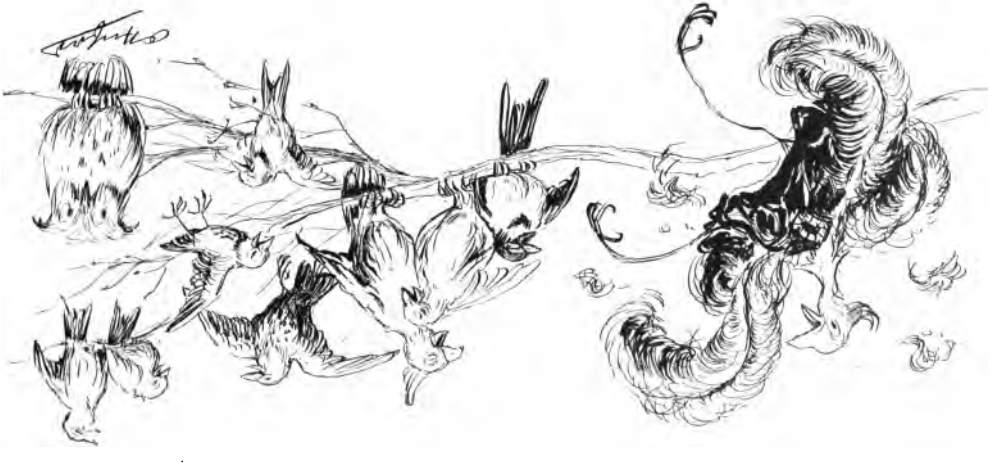
A RARA AVIS

ONCE there was an Easter Bonnet
With some wings and feathers on it,
And a tiny shiny buckle in a bit of ribbon shirred.
Said the ladies, " Please inform us
Why its bill is so enormous,"
And that foolish little Easter Bonnet thought it was a bird!

It slyly watched its chances,
And escaping people's glances,
It flew straight out the window and it lighted on a tree.
With fear its wings were quaking,
And its little frame was shaking,
But it sat there smiling bravely though 't was frightened as could be.

Said the birds, " You 're of our feather,
Come and let us flock together,"
But the Bonnet answered proudly, " I 'm exclusive and select;
And although I could be pleasant
To an ostrich or a pheasant,
For me to herd with common birds you really can't expect."

Said a hunter, " This is pretty,
I will take it home to Kitty,"
Then he aimed his gun and shot it and it fell without a word.
Then it gave a final flutter,
And pertly seemed to mutter,
" Well, after all, I 'd rather be a Bonnet than a bird."



A PASTORAL IN POSTERS

THE mid-day moon lights up the rocky sky;
The great hills flutter in the greenish breeze;
While far above the lowing turtles fly
And light upon the pinky-purple trees.

The gleaming trill of jagged, feathered rocks
I hear with glee as swift I fly away,
And over waves of subtle woolly flocks
Crashes the breaking day!

A BALLADE OF REVOLT

WASHINGTON'S cherry-tree I prize,
And Jonah's whale, — and how I hate
Iconoclasts who would revise
The old traditions, small or great.
Yet there be fools who idly prate
Of late research; and some buffoon
Declares the old man out of date, —
Now there 's a woman in the moon.

Aggressive women I despise,
Yet they are everywhere of late;
Insistent, bold, and overwise,
They meddle with affairs of state.
Unending trouble they create,
And deem their services a boon;
Much grave disturbance I await,
Now there 's a woman in the moon.

I know just how she 'll scrutinise
Each timid lover and his mate;
She 'll slyly peer with curious eyes,
When Dick and I shall stroll or skate;

I 'm positive, at any rate,
I would n't even dare to spoon
With Robbie Smithers at the gate,
Now there 's a woman in the moon.

L'ENVOI

Sweetheart, it is a cruel fate,
Her advent 's most inopportune ;
It spoils our moonlight tête-à-tête,
Now there 's a woman in the moon.

THE ILL WIND

THE Little Ill Wind that blows nobody good
Came puffing along as fast as he could.

And he thought to himself as he wickedly blew,
" What mischief a little ill wind can do ! "

He came on the wild-rose bush with a bound,
And the prettiest petals fell off on the ground.

The leaves on the trees he kept ashake
Till their poor little stems began to ache.

Oh, he was a bad little, mad little wind,
In every possible way he sinned.

If a passer-by sniffed the new-mown hay,
He blew its fragrance the other way.

He tickled the grasses until they shook,
And tirelessly ruffled a placid brook.

He broke the string of Tot's balloon,
And carried it upwards toward the moon.

He blew back the tress of Clorinda's hair, —
Which her lover had just resolved to dare.

Then he came to my window, with cheeks puffed out,
And blew my papers all about.

Till I threatened to put him in print some day, —
Which frightened him so that he blew away

And hid himself in the depths of the wood,
That little Ill Wind that blows nobody good.

THE WHIST PLAYER'S SOLILOQUY

TO trump, or not to trump, — that is the question;
Whether 't is better in this case to notice
The leads and signals of outraged opponents,
Or to force trumps against a suit of diamonds,
And by opposing, end them?
To trump, — to take, —
No more; and by that trick to win the lead
And after that return my partner's spades
For which he signalled, — 't is a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To trump, — to take, —
To take! perchance to win! Ay, there 's the rub;
For if we win this game, what hands may come
When we have shuffled up these cards again!
Play to the score? Ah! yes, there 's the defect
That makes this Duplicate Whist so much like work.
For who would heed the theories of Hoyle,
The laws of Pole, the books of Cavendish,
The Short-suit system, leads American,
The Eleven Rule Finesse, the Fourth-best play,

The Influence of Signals on the Ruff,
When he himself this doubtful trick might take
With a small two-spot? Who would hesitate
But that the dread of something afterward,
An undiscovered discard, or forced lead
When playing the return, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather lose the tricks we have
To win the others that we know not of.
Thus Duplicate Whist makes cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of Bumblepuppy
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And good whist players of great skill and judgment,
With this regard their formulas defy,
And lose the game by ruffing.

MY FRIENDS

WITHIN one room, around one desk
Consorted scribblers three;
Each one was more or less renowned,—
Kipling and Howells and me.

Kipling sat there with pen in hand,
But not a word wrote he;
And Howells, too, seemed lost in thought,—
Which was the case with me.

And Kipling smiled a blooming smile
In sympathetic glee,
As from his heights of cleverness
He kindly looked on me.

Howells leaned back and closed his eyes
Quite introspectively;
Which somehow seemed to make me think
That he approved of me.

They 'll never write, they 'll never speak,—
They 're photographs, you see;
But still, we are a jolly crowd,—
Kipling and Howells and me.

TO CERTAIN CONSERVATIVES

WHY this tempest in a teapot? Why this much ado for naught?
Why this worry lest some literary wares be cheaply bought?

Our Few Books lie at our elbow, then what matters it to us
If the Average Reader's stock of books *is* multitudinous?

If the publishers are issuing editions large and cheap,
'T is because the Average Reader will not pay the prices steep.

We should smile on them benignly and feel very glad indeed;
For when books were rare and costly, these same people did n't read.

And I think that the Enlightened surely ought to understand
That the Cheapening Process came to meet a Popular Demand.

Just as in all other branches imitators imitate —
Since *we* eat with sterling silver, must there be no triple plate?

We may have a clever chef, yet some there be who use canned soups, —
Though we own a rare Bacchante there's demand for Rogers' Groups.

And there is no use in talking to our Unenlightened Friend,
If he has the Cheap Book habit, nothing can his fate forfend.

'T is the manner not the matter that is cheapened, for there be
Fausts for thirty-seven cents and Rubáiyáts for twenty-three.

And the Average Reader buys them at a large Department Store,
Next day delivered carriage free at his suburban door.

But what is this to us? What boots it with incessant care
To try to change the leopard's spots? It is n't our affair.

And if our neighbour's cheapened books are cheapening his cheap brain,
It only proves all efforts to reform him would be vain.

We Enlightened will continue as of yore to buy our books,
Not The Handy Gimcrack Series, nor *éditions de luxe;*

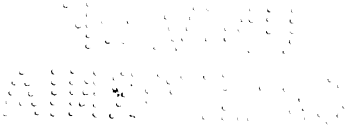
But with calm discrimination we will buy the books we need,
And our brains will not be cheapened as absorbedly we read.

THE ANNUAL SENTENCE

SOCIETY in wig and gown
Sat in the judge's place,
The sternest kind of legal frown
Upon her charming face.

She sadly shook her pretty head:
"On account of their wicked ways,
The World, the Flesh, and the Devil," she said,
"Are sentenced for forty days!"





A BALLADE OF INDIGNATION

NOW if there is one thing I hate
It is lame *vers de société*,
And I cannot help feeling irate
With the versemongers writing to-day.
They rhyme a thing any old way,
They regard neither science nor schools;
But when the French Forms they essay,
At least they might follow the rules.

They consider themselves "up-to-date"
If they've written a *Sonnet to May*,
And fancy they feel on their pate
A chaplet of laurel or bay.
At a triolet or virelai
They rush, like proverbial fools,—
But in their wild, wordy display
At least they might follow the rules.

In their ignorance boldly elate,
To rhymes no attention they pay;
They ride at a rollicking gait
On a Pegasus madly astray.

No hindrance their progress will stay,
No remonstrance their mad ardour cools,—
But in their syllabic array
At least they might follow the rules.

L'ENVOI

Calliope, pardon, I pray,
These workmen without any tools,
And to them this message convey:
At least they might follow the rules.

MY FAMILIAR

THERE 'S a little Lincoln Devil that hangs above my desk,
An ugly, yellow plaster imp, exceedingly grotesque;
But a human, real intelligence in his weird face I see,
And a subtle sympathy exists between my imp and me.

He 's a grinning, graceless rascal, like Kipling's Gunga Din,
And he has a sense of humour that is marvellously keen;
He hears gravely all my joking, and then when I have done,
He seems to shake his shaggy sides, convulsed with silent fun.

I confide to him my secret woes, reveal to him my grief,
For somehow, from his elfish eyes he 's sure to blink relief;
All my highest aspirations and my fondest hopes I bring,
For he hears me with a thoughtful gaze that 's most encouraging.

I acknowledge my shortcomings, and he scowls in glum reproof,
As with his lean and horny claws he grips his cloven hoof.
And then the day my heart broke, — when I told it all to him
A sort of yearning tenderness stole o'er his features grim;

But the dogged, brave endurance of his fixed and stony stare,
His hard-drawn mouth and firm-set teeth, said only, "Grin and bear!"
So I love my little Devil, for he 'll help me win the strife,
With his comprehensive grasp of the philosophy of life.

A BALLAD OF CHRISTMAS BURDENS

THE burden of gay greeting. Vain delight,—
For who among us means a word we say?
In hackneyed speech we clothe our message trite,
And idly voice the wishes of the day.
We smile and bow in our accustomed way,
While our indifference we try to hide,
Stifling our boredom, striving to be gay—
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of much giving. Every year
We realise anew the fearful fraud
This custom is. And then, albeit we sneer,
We buy afresh the bauble and the gaud,
Hoping thereby to win a hollow laud,
Or gain a compliment to feed our pride;
Contented if the giddy world applaud—
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of scant shekels. Woe impends
The wight whose way is with this danger fraught;
Lured by the Spirit of the Times he spends
More than he meant to and more than he ought.
And when he views the gew-gaws he has bought,
And sees his empty pockets yawning wide,
He sadly bows his head in anxious thought—
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of swift shopping. Crowded streets
And rushing messengers our way impede.
Our innocence the wily fakir cheats,
And fleeces us, weak victims to his greed;
Or haply haughty clerks pay us no heed:
At our approach they partly turn aside
Until our ire our patience doth exceed—
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of great eating. Other days
It matters not so much how we may dine;
But at this festival tradition says
We must bestir, and kill the fatted kine.
The board must groan 'neath rarest food and wine,
Boar's head and wassail bowl we must provide,
That our digestion we may undermine—
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

ENVOY

Comrades, and ye who Christmas pleasures seek,
These timely thoughts to you I would confide;
Hearken unto the wisdom that I speak:
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

THE POSTER GIRL

THE blessed Poster Girl leaned out
From a pinky-purple heaven;
One eye was red and one was green;
Her bangs were cut uneven;
She had three fingers on her hand,
And the hairs on her head were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No sunflowers did adorn;
But a heavy Turkish portière
Was very neatly worn;
And the hat that lay along her back
Was yellow, like canned corn.

It was a kind of wobbly wave
That she was standing on,
And high aloft she flung a scarf
That must have weighed a ton.
And she was rather tall, — at least
She reached up to the sun.

She curved and writhed, and then she said,
Less green of speech than blue:
"Perhaps I *am* absurd — perhaps
I *don't* appeal to you;
But my artistic worth depends
Upon the point of view."

I saw her smile, although her eyes
Were only smudgy smears;
And then she swished her swirling arms,
And wagged her gorgeous ears.
She sobbed a blue-and-green checked sob,
And wept some purple tears.

SONNET ON THE SONNET ON THE SONNET

WHAT is the sonnet on the sonnet? Well,
It is a bit of verbal filigree,
A mass of metaphor and simile,
A little wooden poem made to sell.
What does the sonnet on the sonnet tell?
It murmurs of the murmurs of the sea,
Or buzzes of the buzzing of the bee,
Or tinkles of the tinkling of a bell.

Why is the sonnet on the sonnet writ?
Forsooth, he deems that he a boon confers
Who paints the lily or pure gold refines;
And so the writer glories in his wit,
And calls himself a poet; yet he errs:
He gives us only fourteen prosy lines.



SPRING'S REVENGE

FATHER TIME in his office was sitting,
When he happened to spy
A calendar nigh.
"Goodness me!" he exclaimed, "how I 'm flitting—
My days are just scurrying by!

"The world has used up the whole winter,
And demands the next stage
At the turn of the page;
I declare, one must be a real sprinter
To keep up with the pace of this age.

"Here, Spring, get your garlands and flowers;
With laughter and mirth
You must skip down to earth,
Take plenty of sunshine and showers,
And hurry for all you are worth."

Then said Spring, with a pout of unreason,
"Oh, please, Father dear,
Let me off just this year;
I hate the Earth more every season,
It 's a silly, absurd little sphere!"



"Why, my child," said old Father Time, frowning,
"They are waiting, you know,
And of course you must go,
The poets their Queen would be crowning.
What on Earth has offended you so?"

"Spring odes, lays, and ballads they fashion;
I 've known one man to pen
As many as ten!
And I vow" — here she flew in a passion —
"I *never* will go there again!"

"Well, of course you can't help their admiring,"
Said Time, looking wise,
"So I would advise
That you travel incog., by attiring
Yourself in some sort of disguise."

"Oh, Time, what a clever suggestion!
'T is the very best thing,"
Exclaimed giddy young Spring.
"Now what shall I wear? — that 's the question,
When my merry way earthward I wing.

"Here 's a snow robe of Winter's, that 's jolly;
I 'll take it to wear,
And I 'll stick in my hair
Some mistletoe sprays and some holly—
They 'll never know me, I declare!"



SPRING'S REVENGE

" Come, come," said old Time, " you must hurry,
'T is Feb. 28,
March 1 is your date,
And I 'm in a sad state of worry,
For I am morally sure you 'll be late."

" All right," answered Spring, " I am going."
Her mantle she drew
Around her and flew
Down to Earth, where 't was blowing and snowing —
She crept in and nobody knew.



A BALLADE OF PETITION

"The Blue Skalallatoot stories are all morning stories."
— RUDYARD KIPLING

PRINCE of the Pen, your work comprises
Love and Glory and Fame and Gore,
Your versatile genius authorises
The babble of babes and the jungle roar,
Tales you tell of the crew and corps,
The old official and young recruit;
We 've read all these, and we beg for more —
We want the Blue Skalallatoot.

The weird name baffles all surmises,
Its strange uncertainty we 'd explore;
For ever the heart of man despises
The mysteries he has solved before;
We only delve for the hidden ore,
We crave unknown, not forbidden fruit;
Give us the treasure you have in store,
We want the Blue Skalallatoot.

Tell us, we pray, what his shape and size is,
 Did he reside on the sea or shore?
Recount his exciting enterprises,
 Tell what he lived on and what he wore;
 Over his story we fain would pore,
Sharpen your quill or tune your lute;
 In verse or story or old folk-lore
We want the Blue Skalallatoot.

L'ENVOI

 Kipling, we've read your tales of yore,
 How Bagheera growled and Mulvaney swore.
Now whether he's Man or Thing or Brute,
We want the Blue Skalallatoot.

CUPID'S FAILURE

CUPID one day, in idle quest,
 Fitted a dainty dart
And aimed it at Priscilla's breast,
 To strike Priscilla's heart.

Clean through it went, no heart was there;
 Said Cupid, "I believe
Priscilla's just the girl to wear
 Her heart upon her sleeve."

But there, alack! it was not found;
 "Aha!" cried Cupid, "note
Her frightened air; now I'll be bound
 Her heart is in her throat."

Failure again. On slender chance
 He one more arrow shoots;
Assuming from her downcast glance
 Her heart is in her boots.

Foiled, Cupid threw aside his bow;
 "She has no heart," said he.
(He did not know that long ago
 She gave her heart to me.)

THE CELEBRANTS

WITH a shout of joy the rocket stars
Shot up through the evening air,
Triumphantly they reached the sky,
And the stars of God were there.
"Make way!" the rocket stars cried out,
"Make way, and give us place:
We have a mission to perform,
We've travelled leagues of space.
We're sent up here to celebrate
A glorious country's birth —
Make way! But a moment we can stay,
Ere we die and fall to earth."

Then spake the old and kindly stars:
"Ye be bright, oh, rocket-spawn,
But we are here since the morning stars
Sang at Creation's dawn.
By the Master Hand we were hurled on high
To celebrate the Day.
We, too, but shine for the moment, Time,
And then we fade for aye.
But have your way, oh, tiny sparks,
And while ye may, shine on."
Ere the kindly voices ceased to speak,
The rocket stars were gone.

"THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS"

COME with the rest of us
Down to the sea!
There is where we
Show out the best of us.
Holiday keep,
Chums with the waves;
When saucy winds sing,
All of our cares
Back to them fling;
Doldrums, despairs
Burying deep
In the upspringing caves.
Come then with me,
Down to the sea,
Down to the sea.

'Neath the sun blinking,
All the forenoon
On deck I lie,
And look without shrinking
My soul in the eye,
Hearing the croon

Of wandering waves
 That have lost their way;
 Then a dashing of spray,
 Like all April let loose,
Now daring the braves,
 Now calling a truce.
Then under our view
Grey melts to blue,
Blue hardens to grey.
Oh, what a day!
Is there such thing as
 Sorrow or age?
Is there such sting as
 Rancour or rage?

How much he misses
 Who knows not the sea!
Its lingering kisses
 Are salt on our lips —
 How the boat skips,
Dipping and scooping!
 Here is a sight,
 Here is delight
Out of all whooping!
Vogue-la-galère,
Devil-may-care,

We know the Master-Word,
We have its summons heard.
Come then with me
Down to the sea,
Down to the sea.

A MAIDEN'S NO

Maidens turn their heads away
Meaning yes, and saying nay. — *Old Song.*

SHE thought to mask her heart from me
With jest and laughter gay;
I knew she loved me by her glance
(She looked the other way).

I sent her roses, begging she
Would wear them. The coquette
Told me she loved me by her choice
(She wore some mignonette).

And when a rival claimed my waltz,
By her capricious whim
She plainly showed she cared for me
(She gave the dance to him).

She loved me well; and one fair night
I asked her if 't were so;
I knew it by her whispered word
(She softly murmured "No").

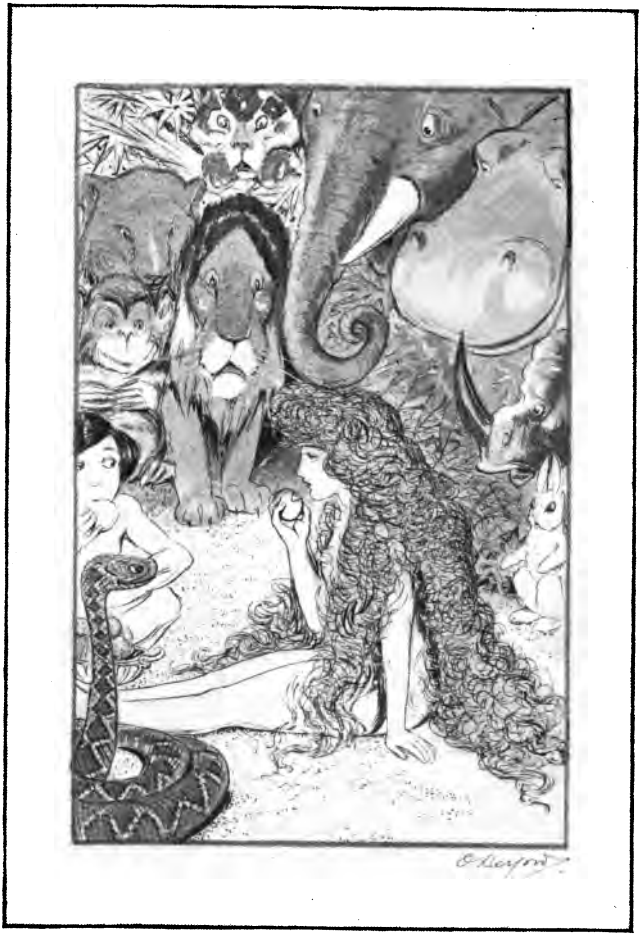
THE ORIGINAL SUMMER GIRL

AFTER much biologic research,
From evidence strong, I believe
That I have found out
Beyond shadow of doubt
That the first Summer Girl was Eve.

She had unconventional ways,
She lived out-of-doors, and all that;
She was tanned by the sun
Until brown as a bun,
For she roamed 'round without any hat.

To a small garden-party she went,
Where the men were exceedingly few;
But she captured a mate
And settled her fate,
As often these Summer Girls do.

Now, my statement of course I have proved,
But as evidence that is n't all;
A Summer Girl she
Is conceded to be
Because she staid there till the Fall.



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THE DÉBUTANTE

THERE 'S a new heart awaiting a tenant;
To whom shall its portals unclose?
Dan Cupid is flying his pennant
At The Sign of the Lily and Rose.

This heart is not offered for selling,
The owner all freely bestows
A hostelry fit for Love's dwelling,
At The Sign of the Lily and Rose.

There 's a happy smile caught in her dimple,
That only a *débutante* shows;
And chatter is guileless and simple
At The Sign of the Lily and Rose.

She 's pleased with the veriest trifles,
No artful bewitchment she knows;
But Cupid a sigh or two stifles
At The Sign of the Lily and Rose.

And, indeed, the poor fellow has reason,
 As he thinks of the long string of beaux
Who 'll successively stop for a season
 At The Sign of the Lily and Rose.

BALLADE OF WISDOM AND FOLLY

(A DOUBLE REFRAIN)

I STUDY wise themes with rigid care,
Logic and law and philosophy,
Sermons and science, and I declare
Wisdom 's the goodliest gain for me.
But when I read with a lively glee
Rollicking tales of fun and mirth,
I laugh to myself, and I clearly see
Folly 's the fairest thing on earth.

To copy the masters I oft repair,—
Of Rubens and Rembrandt a devotee;
I study line and school with care,—
Wisdom 's the goodliest gain for me.
Then I see a sketch in a lighter key,
Ah, line and school were never worth
This little French bit of frivolity,—
Folly 's the fairest thing on earth.

I know a girl who is calm and fair,
 Of ancient and noble pedigree;
She 's wise and learnéd beyond compare, —
 Wisdom 's the goodliest gain for me.
 But another holds my heart in fee,
Without her, life were a dreary dearth;
 Fickle and foolishly fond is she, —
Folly 's the fairest thing on earth.

L'ENVOI

 Prince, I am sure you must agree
 Wisdom 's the goodliest gain for me.
But ever I 'll give it the widest berth, —
Folly 's the fairest thing on earth.

A POSSIBILITY

I ONLY kissed her hand;
Is that why Lisette dislikes me?
I cannot understand —
I *only* kissed her hand,
I deserved a reprimand; —
But another notion strikes me,
I only kissed her *hand;*
Is *that* why Lisette dislikes me?

A MEMORY

HOW dear to this heart are the old-fashioned dresses,
When fond recollection presents them to view!
In fancy I see the old wardrobes and presses
Which held the loved gowns that in girlhood I knew.
The wide-spreading mohair, the silk that hung by it;
The straw-coloured satin with trimmings of brown;
The ruffled foulard, the pink organdy nigh it;
But, oh! for the pocket that hung in each gown!
The old-fashioned pocket, the obsolete pocket,
The praiseworthy pocket that hung in each gown.

That dear roomy pocket I'd hail as a treasure,
Could I but behold it in gowns of to-day;
I'd find it the source of an exquisite pleasure,
But all my modistes sternly answer me "Nay!"

A MEMORY

'T would be so convenient when going out shopping,
'T would hold my small purchases coming from town;
And always my purse or my kerchief I 'm dropping —
Oh, me! for the pocket that hung in my gown!
The old-fashioned pocket, the obsolete pocket,
The praiseworthy pocket that hung in my gown.

A gown with a pocket! How fondly I 'd guard it!
Each day ere I 'd don it, I 'd brush it with care;
Not a full Paris costume could make me discard it,
Though trimmed with the laces an Empress might wear.
But I have no hope, for the fashion is banished;
The tear of regret will my fond visions drown;
As fancy reverts to the days that have vanished,
I sigh for the pocket that hung in my gown.
The old-fashioned pocket, the obsolete pocket,
The praiseworthy pocket that hung in my gown.

THE VAMPIRE OF THE HOUR

(WITH APOLOGIES TO MR. KIPLING AND MR. BURNE-JONES)

A FOOL there was, and he paid his fare
(Even as you and I!)
To see Le Gallienne's hank of hair
(We said he was only a fake affair),
But the fool he called him a genius rare,
(Even as you and I!)

Oh, the fads we make, and the freaks we take,
And the glories we all believe
Belong to the jaundiced degenerate,
Or the mystical mattoid at any rate,
With his handkerchief up his sleeve.

A critic there was, and he had his whack
(Even as you and I!)
He wrote of a wondrous symposiac,
(And it was n't the least like Le Gallienne's clack),
But a critic must follow the beaten track,
(Even as you and I!)

Oh, the lies we write and the lies we cite
And the excellent things we say
About whatever may happen to be
The idol to which we bend the knee,
The fetish of the day.

The fool to meet the freak was bid,
(Even as you and I!)
Hoping he 'd show where his wit lay hid,
(But it is n't on record Le Gallienne did),
And the fool was bored, and so he slid
(Even as you and I!)

And it is n't the vice and it is n't the price
That causes our gloom profound;
It 's coming to know that we all are fools,
And we 're just as foolish as other fools
Who follow the treadmill round.

AN AQUARELLE

A MERMAID, people sometimes think,
Has nothing else to do
But to sit on the rocks
And comb her locks
The livelong summer through.

But I will tell you of Mermaid Smith,
And I 'll tell you of Mermaid Brown,
Who would oft dispense
O'er the garden fence
The gossip of the town.

On summer mornings, Mermaid Smith
With her apron o'er her head,
And Mermaid Brown
In a calico gown
And a sun-bonnet striped with red,

At their garden gate for an hour or more
Would loiter with idle fins,
The little twirls
Of their golden curls
Done up in crimping-pins.

And Mermaid Brown would tell Mermaid Smith
How her jellyfish would n't jell;
It had simmered and boiled,
Till she feared it was spoiled.
Said Mermaid Smith, "Do tell!"

And Mermaid Smith had trouble too.
She had set her sponge to rise,
And it had n't riz.
"What a shame that is!"
Said Mermaid Brown with sighs.

Then perhaps they 'd discuss Miss Lorelei Green
Who disappeared one day;
With a gay sea-urchin,
While her parents were searchin',
She wickedly ran away.

And the two good fishwives deeply sighed,
And expressed a heartfelt wish
That both of their daughters
In calm, placid waters
Should attend a polite school of fish.

Then one would say, "This won't do for me!
It 's time my work began."
"And I must away,"
The other would say,
"I 've some ocean currents to can."

And so the Mermaids, as you see,
Are very much like us;
A little work,
A little shirk,
A little fluster and fuss.

IN ABSENCE

(A RONDEAU)

ON Christmas Day as far and near
The bells ring out their message clear,
Your thoughts will turn to me, I know,
And mine to you as swift will go,
To tell you that I love you, dear.

And those whom you may see and hear
Will not give greeting more sincere
Than this I send across the snow
On Christmas Day.

Amid the mirth and merry cheer
Of this glad time that crowns the year,
Haply beneath the mistletoe,
I 'll shyly whisper, sweet and low,
A soft *je t'aime* just for your ear,
On Christmas Day.

FROM VIVETTE'S MILKMAID

A MAYDE ther was, semely and meke enow,
She sate a-milken of a Purpil Cowe:
Rosy hire Cheke as is the Month of Maye,
And sikerly her merry Songe was gay
As of the Larke uprist, washen in Dewe.
Like Shene of Sterres sperkled hire Eyen two.
Now came ther by that Way a hendy Knight,
The Mayde espien in morwening Light.
A faire Person he was, of Corage trewe,
With lusty Berd and Chekes of rody Hewe:
Dere Ladye (quod he), far and wide I 've straied,
Uncouthe Aventure in strange Contree made,
Fro Berwike unto Ware. Parde I vowe
Erewhiles I never sawe a Purpil Cowe!
Fayn wold I knowe how Catel thus can be?
Tel me, I praie you, of yore Courtesie!
The Mayde hire Milken stent. — Goode Sir, she saide,
The Master's mandement on us ylaid
Decrees that in these yclept Gilden Houres
Hys Kyne shall ete of nought but Vylet Floures.

A WOMAN'S WAIL

WHY do I wear a veil?
'T is of no use,
'T is always fetching loose,
A plaything of the winds, that takes delight
In ever being wrong and never right.
Though of my costume 't is a chief detail,
It makes me fret and fume and fuss and rail.
This veil!
I cannot get it off when it is on,
And once I doff it, then I cannot don.
Why do I wear it? 'T is a nuisance great,
Beyond all words to state.
And an expense
Immense!
This wretched, flimsy veil!
It is so frail,
To-day I buy a new one, and, behold,
To-morrow it is old!
Forth to the shops then angrily I hie
Another veil to buy.

On every side I see rare bargain sales,
But not of veils.
And so I pay an awful price,
For I must have it nice;
With knots,
Or spots,
Or tiny polka dots;
Or simple plain illusion. But of such
I buy six times as much.
And so,
You know,
The cost is just as great.
Oh, how I hate
A veil!
Do you suppose
I like to feel it rubbing 'gainst my nose?
Forever catching on my eyelash tips,
Persistently adhering to my lips,
The while the ill-dyed blackness of its lace
Makes grimy smudges on my face.
Or if the veil be white,
Itself it smudges till it is a sight!
Why do I wear it?
Why?
It is a crime thus daily to enwrap
One's self in such a microbe-trap!

A WOMAN'S WAIL

Death and disease lurk hidden in its curves.
A pest! A bane! A blot upon our sex,
Just made to vex
A burdened woman's overburdened nerves.
Oh, Fashion, hear my wail!
Or is my plea to go without a veil
Without avail?

THE DISCRIMINANT

GIVE me no colonial novel, give me no best-selling screed,
For I 'm told Emotional Studies are the only things to read, —
Questions of the Inner Ego by some stylish woman writ;
Analytic introspection of capacities is It.

Morbider than Henry James's, capabler than Meredith's,
See the Elementary Heroines struggling like Hellenic myths!
Oh, the joy of knowing surely how an elemental mind
Is affected by emotion of an elemental kind!

Oh, the deep delight of learning just what's psychically true,
By impressive demonstration from a subtle point of view!
What extraordinary insights and reactions most complex
Follow elemental kisses from the elemental sex.

And ecstasy unspeakable through simple souls is sent
When the psychical and physical are nebulously blent.
And how deeply we Discriminating Readers have
enjoyed
The poetry of th' Impalpable effectively employed.

So give me no more novels of historical import,
No frivolous romances of a wishy-washy sort;
No stories of adventure or tales of hidden crime,
For on these themes Discriminating Persons waste
no time.

And though my baser nature all longingly may look
Toward Howells's new novel or Kipling's latest book;
Though in a thoughtless moment it seems to me I 'd
like
To read of Tommy's Grizel or of Stringtown on the
Pike;

Such desires I sternly banish, for I 'm bound, at
any rate —
In my fictional selection I *will* discriminate;
And nothing written shall my literary palate please
But a Psychic Impressivity in subtle harmonies.

NOTHING TO READ

THE BALLAD OF A BOSTON MAID

MISS PARTHENIA BROWNING, of Boston, they say,
Has accounts at three separate bookshops;
And yet she remarked to a caller one day,
In a very despairing, resigned sort of way,
That one might as well go to the cookshops,
For nothing worth reading appeared any more;
She 'd looked over the volumes at every bookstore,
And they all were so trashy. For her part, indeed,
She was free to confess she had nothing to read.
"Nothing to read?" said her friend, in surprise,
Toward Parthenia's bookcases casting her eyes —
"Why, how can you say so, when all of those books
Have never been opened, to judge from their looks?
And they 're very attractive — a well-chosen lot;
I should think you 'd enjoy that fine set of Scott."
Miss Parthenia blushed, as if caught in a crime,

But she answered: "I 'm saving Scott till I 've more time."

The friend ventured again, "Read Dickens, my dear!"

"Oh, his tales are so sad, and his people so queer!"

"Try Pope!" "He 's too heavy." "Then Hope!" "He 's too light."

"Read Howells's novels!" "His plots are so slight."

"Then Henry James' stories!" "His words are so long!"

"Thomas Hardy!" "Oh, goodness, he 's really too strong!"

"Then Weyman!" "Too gory!" "Miss Wilkins!" "Too tame!"

"Sarah Grand!" "I hate women who boast of their aim."

"Well, Marie Corelli!" "Oh, don't mention her!"

"Hall Caine!" "No, indeed; something gay I prefer."

"Rudyard Kipling!" "I would, but our family physician

Only yesterday borrowed my whole new edition."

"Jerome!" "He 's too silly." "Zangwill!" "He 's too smart."

"Then Richard Le Gallienne!" "He has no art."

"Mrs. Hodgson Burnett!" "I detest her profanity."
"Miss Rosa N. Cary!" "Can't stand her inanity."
"Try Cooper!" "I've read 'The Spy' and 'The Rover'!"
"Then Trilby!" "I've read that a dozen times over."
"Read something of Marion Crawford's. They say
His latest new book is the talk of the day."
"I dare say it is, but that man writes so fast
I could n't keep up with him. I think the last
Of his books that I read was 'The Ralstons,' and so
I 'm sorry; but I 'll never catch him, I know."
"Read Ian Maclaren." "He 's only a botch."
"Or Barrie!" "He 's good, but I don't care for Scotch."
"Mrs. Oliphant, then, or Mrs. H. Ward!"
"By both of these women I 'm awfully bored."
"The Duchess!" "How dare you!" "Then Stockton or Doyle,
Or Tolstoy's tales of the sons of the soil.
Read Emerson's Essays, Macaulay, or Lamb,
Or read 'The Rubáiyát' of Omar Khayyám.
Read tales of adventure by Irving or Poe,
Or mild-mannered novels by Edward P. Roe;
Du Chaillu, du Maurier, De Quincey, Defoe,
Or Byron, or Homer, or Jean Ingelow;

Or Shakespeare, or Swinburne, Villon, or Verlaine,
Or Sienkiewicz, Merriman, Crockett, or Crane;
Or read Victor Hugo's wild murders and crimes,
Or Oliver Herford's ridiculous rhymes.
Lewis Carroll, or Riley, or Gilbert, or Lear —
Surely some of these authors must please you, my dear!"
But to each of the names in this motley collection
Miss Parthenia Browning opposed an objection.
And later when bidding her caller good-bye,
She said, with a sad little smile and a sigh,
"I 'm so much alone, you 'd be awfully kind
If you 'd help to divert my too studious mind.
And do lend me some books, for you must have agreed
That really and truly I 've nothing to read."

A PICTURE

THE hollyhock lifts its flowery torch,
The meadow is starred with daisies fair;
The roses clamber about the porch,
And bees swing by with an idle air.

On the hillside linger the sheep sedate,
Down in the fields are the lowing kine;
A maiden stands by the farmhouse gate
Embowered by the sprays of a framing vine.

A bird-note trills through the sunny sky;
A rustic swain comes up the road
With a merry smile in his twinkling eye,
As he guides his ox-team's heavy load.

But what does she care for his flattering look,
Or the buzzing bees, or the cows' sweet breath,
Or the clustering vine, or the babbling brook?
She 's a city girl who is bored to death.



A PROBLEM

THERE 'S a whimsey in my noddle, there 's a maggot in my brain,
There 's a doubt upon my spirit that I cannot quite explain.

'T is a grave, important question over which I vacillate, —
Does Enlightenment enlighten, and does Culture cultivate?

We are of the Cognoscenti, and intuitively know
Just the shades of thoughtful fancy that an author ought to show.

But from our exalted level should we drop a poisoned hint
To the placid ones who wallow in the sordid slums of print?

Should the Unenlightened Readers be sardonically hissed
If they like a Duchess novel better than *The Egoist?*

Should we rare ones who inhabit the exalted realms
of thought,
Dictate to the Unenlightened what they ought n't or
they ought?

To the masses should our classes offer Ibsen when we
find
Mr. Caine and Miss Corelli better please the massy
mind?

Should we shudder to discover that they cannot get
the pith
Of the tenebrastic subtleties of Mr. Meredith?

Should we rudely contradict them when they con-
fidently say,
"Omar wrote *The Iliad* and Holmes' first name was
Mary J."?

Or shall we abandon flatly this whole altruistic fight,
With the philosophic dictum that "Whatever is, is
right"?

Then, instead of wasting time in teaching others how
to think,
We can spend those precious moments with Hafiz or
Maeterlinck.

Let us stop our futile task of pointing to the open
door,
Let the Enlightened cease enlightening and the Cult-
ured cult no more.

THE DEGENERATE NOVELIST

BENEATH a sheltering pseudonym
He writes those grisly tales and grim,
That sicken and depress;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow aster is to him,
And it is nothing less.

HER SPINNING-WHEEL

HER spinning-wheel she deftly guides,
As by the homely hearth she bides;
Within a quaint, old straight-backed chair,
A damsel with a modest air,
Over the treadle swift, presides.

But through the years Time onward glides,
Careless if good or ill betides;
Nor will his ruthless changes spare
Her spinning-wheel.

Another cycle he provides,
Though censor carps and critic chides,
The modern maid, fearless and fair,
Daintily gay and debonair;
Trimly equipped, triumphant rides
Her spinning wheel.

UNKIND FATE

TO a pretty little cottage,
At Seashore-by-the-Sea,
I went to spend a season
With my friend, Carruthers Lee.
We met two charming maidens,
As sweet as they could be;
But fate was unpropitious,
As I 'm sure you will agree.
For I loved Polly,
And Polly loved Lee,
And Lee loved Kitty,
And Kitty loved me.

I could n't restrain my passion
For Polly, so sweet was she;
While Carruthers was just determined
That Kitty his bride should be.
The girls were shy and timid,
But 't was easy enough to see
That Polly was fond of Carruthers,
While Kitty favored me.

UNIV. OF
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Yes, I loved Polly,
And Polly loved Lee,
And Lee loved Kitty,
And Kitty loved me.

I pleaded my cause with Polly,
I wooed her on bended knee;
While Carruthers courted Kitty,
And earnestly urged his plea.
The girls looked sad and wistful,
Or laughed in pretended glee,
But they answered "No" to our pleadings;
And so, all hopelessly,
I still love Polly,
And Polly loves Lee;
And Lee loves Kitty,
And Kitty loves me.

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WOMAN'S WAY

FATHER TIME sat in his study,
Lounging in his easy-chair.
Nice old chap, so hale and ruddy,
With his long white beard and hair.

Suddenly unto his portal
Came a sound of flying feet —
Prettier than any mortal —
April entered, fair and sweet.

In a gown of primrose yellow,
With a manner gay and blithe —
"Daddy Time, you dear old fellow!"
Said she, fingering his scythe.

Father Time looked wisely at her,
And indulgently he smiled.
"I don't care to hear you flatter;
Tell me what you want, my child."

Then said April, coming closer,
By the forelock taking him,
"Easter 's almost here — and oh, sir,
I 've my Easter hat to trim.

"Such a pretty Easter bonnet —
But, you see I really need
Some spring birds and posies on it."
But Time thundered "No, indeed!

"Such audacity 's appalling!
Birds and flowers belong to May."
Then the crystal tears came falling
(Crafty April knew the way).

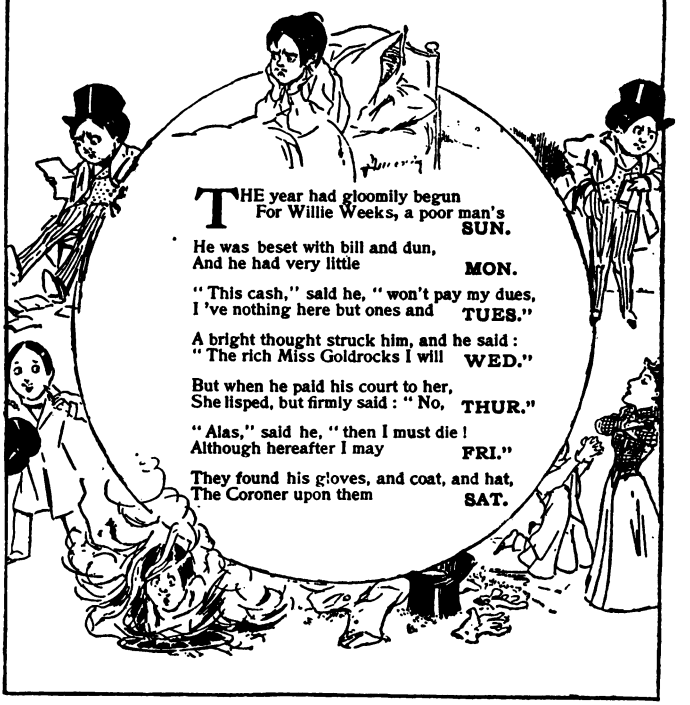
And she said, though April showers
Almost drowned her plaintive words,
"Can't I have a few small flowers —
And a half a dozen birds?"

"There, there! do not cry, my poppet"
(Time was just like other men).
"*Don't* cry! If you 'll only stop it
You may have your posies then."

Quick the tears that had been streaming
Disappeared and left no trace.
Soon a radiant smile was beaming
On Miss April's lovely face.

And she had for her adorning
All the birds and blossoms bright.
Crowned with these on Easter morning
April was a charming sight.

One Week



THE year had gloomily begun
For Willie Weeks, a poor man's **SUN.**

He was beset with bill and dun,
And he had very little **MON.**

"This cash," said he, "won't pay my dues,
I 've nothing here but ones and **TUES."**

A bright thought struck him, and he said:
"The rich Miss Goldrocks I will **WED."**

But when he paid his court to her,
She lisped, but firmly said: "No, **THUR."**

"Alas," said he, "then I must die!
Although hereafter I may **FRI."**

They found his gloves, and coat, and hat,
The Coroner upon them **SAT.**

THE TRAILING SKIRT

OH, product of this vain and vapid age,
I would I could thy doom presage!
With righteous wrath it makes me rage
To think that in these late, enlightened years
Such an enormity appears
As thy lank length. I marvel and lament
That such a bane was sent.
Why cumberest thou the earth?
Of thee we have no need,
Even though thou 'rt decreed
By Worth.
Thou trundling, trailing skirt!
Smearing thyself with dirt,
Forever catching in the swinging doors
As we go in and out of stores.
One should be a contortionist expert,
To manage a trained skirt.
Trained skirt, indeed! I would thou hadst been
trained
To hold thyself up when it rained!
Perchance I pick thee up and carry thee,
Then see —

My arm
Shortly grows cramped and tired.
Where is thy charm,
O trailing skirt, that thou shouldst be desired?
Perchance I let thee trail,
A mass of cloth that drags
In rags
And tags
Like Dorothy Draggletail.
Then on thy folds a sturdy heel is placed.
Of course,
I 'm stopped perforce.
(I feel thee parting from my waist!)
When I proceed 't is with the dread
That I shall tread
Upon some other victim's dragging gown,
And, peering down,
I pick my steps with care about the town.
I may not look to left or right,
I miss the sight
Of all that I came out to see;
I pass the friends who bow to me
Without a glance.

Or, if perchance
I shun the dangers of the muddy street
And in a crowded car lurch to a seat,

That dreadful train attacks the angry, vexed
Man who sits next!
And, like a living thing,
Contrives to writhe and cling
And twine itself completely round his feet.
Chagrined, I grab the floundering folds,
While every one beholds
The lining splashed and binding frayed
Of my best "tailor-made,"
Which, when I started, but an hour ago,
Was neat and trim and *comme il faut.*

Oh, how can rational women wear
Such awful things, nor dare
Even feebly to protest
Against the pest?
To be so blindly bound by Fashion's thralls,
Afraid to break her rules,
We must be silly fools!
At any rate,
We must be what Max Nordau calls
Degenerate!

QUATRAIN

YOUTH throws a glamour over everything,
Clothes wrong with right, and veils a lie with truth;
But age, more daring still, essays to fling
A glamour over youth.

THE BALLADE OF THE AD.

THE merit of story or verse
Let others assert and explain,
Let others recount and rehearse
The work of the erudite brain.
The subject of my humble strain
No eulogy ever has had,
For sages and poets disdain
The cheery, ubiquitous ad.

In language both graphic and terse,
In homely, colloquial vein
Your notice it seems to coerce,
Your attention it 's bound to enchain.
Although of its art you complain,
Though its rhythm and metre are bad,
Yet still in your mind 't will remain,
The cheery, ubiquitous ad.

If you but a trifle disburse,
It offers you marvellous gain;
And quite within reach of your purse
A miracle you may obtain,

From a cot to a castle in Spain,
A fancy, a fake, or a fad;
There 's nothing escapes its domain,
The cheery, ubiquitous ad.

L'ENVOI

Gentle reader, I 'm sure you 'll maintain
That he is a churl or a cad
Who counts as a nuisance or bane
The cheery, ubiquitous ad.

AUBREY BEARDSLEY'S PICTURES

A SPLOTCH of black, a splash of white,
And here and there a curving line;
The artists rave, the critics fight,
The people murmur "How divine!"

HER EASTER MORNING

I SAT at my ease, and my mind was at rest,
The holiest feelings were filling my breast,
For I knew I was smartly and properly dressed
And was calmly convinced I was looking my best;
But the musical drones,
In monotonous tones,
Sent a feeling of drowsiness all through my bones,
And visions unusual my senses impressed;
The air all about me was surely possessed
With curious things
Which soared upon wings,
Or waved through the air suspended by strings.
I thought they were butterflies, fairies, or bats,
But on closer inspection they proved to be hats
Of every description, from steeples to flats;
And though moving for years in the best of society,
I never have seen such enormous variety
Of cottage and poke,
Of turban and toque,
Trimmed with feathers of ostrich and feathers of coque.

There were bonnets of velvet and bonnets of lace,
For every occasion and every place;
Bonnets of silks and bonnets of satins,
Bonnets for vespers and bonnets for matins,
Bonnets of jet
And bonnets of net,
Trimmed with every conceivable kind of rosette.
A Gainsborough beaver, with wide rolling brim,
A demure little gipsy, exceedingly prim.
There were hats of all colours, blue, white, green, and black,
Turned up in the front and turned up in the back,
And a ripple-edged, feather-trimmed, beaded felt plaque.
And all of these hats,
Like a great swarm of gnats,
The whole place o'erspread,
And to my great dread
Each one seemed determined to light on my head.
I tried hard to say
"Oh, take them away,"
When the voice of a neighbour devoutly implored
At my side, "We beseech Thee to hear us Good Lord,"
I gave a great start, I awoke with a lurch —
'T was Easter, and I had been sleeping in church.

AN UNWRITTEN POEM

UPON this mossy bank I 'll sit, within this
flowery dell, —
It is the place by poets most preferred, —
And in a blithesome ballad I 'll poetically tell
The sentiments of yonder little bird."

" O poet, spare me ! " cried the bird ; " I 'm weary of
this thing !
Excuse me if I plainly speak my mind ;
But I 've had my poem taken twenty-seven times
this Spring,
Oh, let me go, if you will be so kind ! "

" Why, certainly," the poet said, " it matters not to
me,
Another theme will just as well avail ;
I 'll write a lyric poem to this budding apple-tree,
Or a dithyrambic ode, beginning ' Hail ! ' "

"I beg your pardon," said the tree, "I pray you will desist,
And seek some other victim, if you please;
I've had enough of 'cheered by sun' and 'by the breezes kist.'"
"I'll write then," said the poet, "of the breeze."

"Nay, poet," sighed the weary breeze, "it makes me very tired
To 'toss the tresses of the trees' in rhyme;
Already since the first of May twelve poets I've inspired;
I'll thank you if you'll let me off this time."

"Don't mention it, I beg, O Breeze, — of this fair flow'r I'll speak."
But the flower answered gaily, "I protest!
I cannot pose for you; I've sat for poems all the week,
And I really think I ought to have a rest."

"What *can* I do?" the poet cried. "Ah, here is Spring herself.
Goddess! I pray you grant an interview —
I'll place you in the public eye as fairy, sprite, or elf,
Or write a stirring sonnet to your shoe."



AN UNWRITTEN POEM

"Oh, nonsense, poet!" cried the Spring, "with that
we can dispense;
Why waste your time on hackneyed themes and
trite?
Come, go a-Maying with us, and when sun sets hie
you hence,
And write about the song you did n't write."

THE BOOK LIFTER

YOU 'VE heard of the Book Collector, the Book Lover, the Bookworm,
The Book Maker and Book Seller too, — each is a well-known term.
The " Bookman " and " Book Buyer " are to us a real delight,
But it 's of the bad Book Lifter that I 'm going for to write.
His smile is most engaging, and he has a well-stocked mind,
He 's suave and pleasant spoken and particularly kind:
But I know his tricks and manners, and I tremble when I see
The odious Book Lifter come in to visit me.
He entertains me with the latest literary chat,
As he scans my newest volumes. Then he picks out this or that,
And remarks as he is leaving, with a manner *so* polite:
" I 'll skim this over hurriedly and send it back to-night."

But I know the bad Book Lifter 's the forgetfullest of men,
And I know that I shall never see that borrowed book again.
Or perhaps, with much apology, his case he frankly states,
And begs a book of reference to see about some dates.
He 'll return it " on the morrow," but I feel a little glum
O'er a well-defined conviction that to-morrow 'll never come.
Or perhaps he 's absent-minded — does n't know what he 's about,
When he pockets a small volume, quite unconsciously, no doubt.
Or he comes when I am not at home, and says that he 's a friend
To whom at any time most willingly my books I lend.
Then he enters with assurance and a deprecating smirk,
And takes a handsome copy of an illustrated work.
Or perhaps he is a writer, and some subject, unforeseen,
Necessitates the scanning of a current magazine;

He has mislaid his copy — will I kindly lend him
mine?
Of course in such emergency I really can't decline.
Or he takes the newest novel, which I have n't read
myself,
Or volume six or seven from a set upon the shelf;
Or one of my pet classics, or a rare old Elzevir —
And one by one I sadly see my treasures disappear.
I 'm powerless to prevent them, for I can't be such
a dunce
As to seem to doubt the promise, "This shall be re-
turned at once."
But I sigh for some far desert isle or lonely foreign
shore,
Where the borrowers cease from borrowing and Book
Lifters lift no more.

UTILITARIAN

WHEN Cupid discovered how dull was his dart,
He sharpened it straightway on Phyllis's heart.

UNDER A NEW CHARTER

HELLO! Come in! I called you, Cupid,
To take this box. Handle with care!
Look out! don't be so careless, Stupid;
I'd have you know my heart's in there.

Take it at once, boy, to Miss Kitty,
And say it is a valentine.
How happy she 'll look, and how pretty,
When she discovers it is mine!

Tell her for her my heart is yearning,
And then, unless my judgment errs,
By the same messenger returning
I rather think she 'll send me hers.

What, Cupid, are you back already?
And bringing me Miss Kitty's heart?
Open it quickly! Stay, be steady!
What 's this? A neatly printed chart!

"No spaces left at my disposal —
Possibly some vacated soon;
But I have filed your kind proposal.
Come up and call some afternoon."

And here her heart is designated —
What seas of dreams! what flowery isles!
The boundaries all distinctly stated,
And measured by a scale of smiles.

A large tract 's given to her poodle;
A smaller one contains her cat;
Here is the claim of Lord Fitznoodle,
Here her expensive picture-hat.

Here I observe her mother's quarters;
This large compartment is her dad's;
Here, Revolutionary Daughters,
And here her clubs and freaks and fads.

Here is enshrined her baby cousin,
And here that Count with whom she flirts;
Here are male tenants by the dozen
(They 're only friends, so she asserts).

This corner 's occupied by Irving,
 This by her pearl and turquoise pin;
Although I know I am deserving,
 I don't see how I *can* get in.

LEFT

THE sky is blue, the sea is bright,
The waves are dancing with delight,
The earth is glad, my heart is gay,
Sweet Kitty Somers comes this way.

.

The sky is dark, the sea is grey,
It is a gloomy, doleful day,
The earth is sad, and sad am I,
Miss Katharine Somers passed me by.

AN EXPLANATION

ALL the world loves a lover," they say;
But I prove that untrue every day;
Whenever I try
For a kiss on the sly,
The world seems to get in the way.

And when Mabel goes walking with me,
The world says " Ahem!" and " Te-hee!"
It gives a sly wink,
And I certainly think
It 's as horrid as horrid can be.

So that proverb is lacking in force;
I wonder what gave it its source;
But stay, — oh, I see!
Why, *Mabel* loves me!
And she 's all the world to me, of course!



LOTHARIO LEE was saddened, the world seemed grim and grey;
For Lothario Lee was a lover bold, and to-day was St. Valentine's day.

'T was St. Valentine's day, and he fain would send his heart to the fair Florelle,
For the radiant maid had inspired in his breast a passion he could not quell.

But alas, for the gay Lothario, his heart was held in fee,
Down at Dan Cupid's pawnshop, at the sign of the Roses Three.

Willingly would the lovelorn knight that errant heart reclaim,
But, alas! the luckless Lothario had n't a cent to his name.

So he sadly sat and pondered, as doleful as he could be;
When a brilliant notion struck him — "Done!" cried Lothario Lee.



"I'll send her the pawnshop ticket, my tale of woe 't will tell,
For she alone can redeem my heart, — the rich and rare Florelle."

He sent her the tell-tale ticket, he scribbled a hasty line,
Bidding her call at Dan Cupid's shop and claim her valentine.

And as she read the message, in the soul of the fair Florelle
A joyful thought rang merrily, like a far-away marriage-bell.

With her heart in a frantic flutter, adown the street sped she,
Till she reached Dan Cupid's pawnshop at the sign of the Roses Three.

Cupid sat at a workbench, mending a broken dart;
"I am Florelle," said she, "and I come to claim Lothario's heart.

"Here is the ticket, Cupid; what are the ransom fees?
See, I will pay you the money; give me the heart if you please."

"But I am blind," said Cupid, "I cannot see the name;
Describe the heart you are looking for, and so make good your claim."

"Lothario's heart," said the lady, "is brave and knows no fear."
"Alas," said Cupid, dejectedly, "no such heart is here."

"His heart," said the lady, further, "is honest, and
good, and true."
"No," said Dan Cupid, wofully, "not one of these
hearts will do."

"His heart to me is single, it beats for me alone."
"Come, come," cried Cupid, "impossible! such
hearts I've never known.

"The best in my collection has been mended once or
twice,
But here's a heart that may suit you, if you're will-
ing to pay the price.

"It's a heart that is sad and lonely, a trifle hard and
cold,
It seems to be rather scarred and worn, — in fact, it's
getting old.

"It's somewhat fickle and jealous, a bit impatient,
too,
And branded with several maidens' names, — Coralie,
Rose, and Loo."

"Why, that's the very heart I want," said the lady;
"give it to me.
That's the one I've been describing to you, the
heart of Lothario Lee!"



As she left the shop in triumph, said Cupid, "I seem
to find
Each day a more convincing fact to prove that Love
is blind."

CHRISTMAS EVE

MY childhood's Christmases each brought to me
The wondrous glory of a Christmas-tree;
Now every year since I 've to manhood grown,
I buy a tree for children of my own.
And so to-night my mind looks back and sees
Life a long avenue of Christmas-trees.

PAST AND PRESENT

(WITH APOLOGIES TO MR. HOOD)

I REMEMBER, I remember
The flat where I was born:
The little air-shaft where the sun
Could not peep through at morn;
The stuffy rooms and narrow halls
Unlit by Heaven's ray;
The seven winding flights of stairs
That took my breath away

I remember, I remember
The sickly daffodils
That bloomed in old tomato-cans
Upon the window-sills;
The cupboard where the cake was kept,
And where my brother set
A patent trap to catch a mouse,—
That mouse is living yet!

I remember, I remember
 The sounds I used to know:
The organ on the floor above,
 The violin below;
The cats upon the fire-escape,
 The steam-heat in the wall;
The chorus-girl a-singing in
 The flat across the hall.

I remember, I remember
 The scuttle dark and high
Through which I often used to climb
 To get a glimpse of sky.
I live in first-floor chambers now,
 With nothing to annoy,
But still I 'm farther off from Heaven
 Than when I was a boy.

EPITAPH ON A BALLET DANCER

HERE lies our much-loved Coralie,
She danced o'er death's dark wave;
We 've seen her merry, but till now
We never saw her grave.

AN IMPORTANT TRUST

SCANNING the morning paper o'er,
I find, to my disgust,
A new misfortune is in store —
"They 've formed a Great Ink Trust."

Now must I hang my ink-horn up,
And leave my pens to rust;
Despair and sorrow fill my cup,
"They 've formed a Great Ink Trust."

As chief directors, doubtless, stand
The Publishers, and then
The Literary Agents, and
The Clipping Bureau men.

The stock, of course, is Limited,
A small part may be sold;
But by a Syndicate, 't is said,
The output is controlled.

AN IMPORTANT TRUST

I own 't would give me quite a shock
If these reports I heard:
" Howells and James are common stock,"
And " Kipling is preferred."

" Le Gallienne 's margined heavily;
Maclaren, dropped behind;
Hope shows a hardening tendency,
Doyle's future has declined.

" Hall Caine is selling below par;
In Barrie there 's a lull;
Hardy and Crawford steady are;
Meredith, firm but dull."

Disconsolate and ill at ease
I 'd read these stock reports;
I can't compete with such as these —
It makes me out of sorts.

But stay! such gloomy thoughts I 'll flout,
My mind I 'll readjust —
My inkstand yet may be bought out
By this same Great Ink Trust!

AN UNORTHODOX CHRISTMAS

I WENT to spend the day with Rose, and then
A Christmas greeting passed between us two;
But 't was not " Peace on Earth, good-will to men,"
We only said, " Good-morning," " How d' ye do? "

And then to her I offered smilingly
The present she expected me to bring;
There were no hanging hose — no Christmas-tree —
The box was tied in paper with a string.

We did n't sit beside the Yule-log's blaze, —
We just turned on the radiator's steam;
And dinner, unlike those of storied days,
Gave no plum-pudding, but some bisque ice-cream.

We did n't hear the church-bells' solemn toll;
And when we had our Christmas evening lunch,
We did n't have a steaming wassail-bowl,
But just a jug of simple claret punch.

We trampled on traditions, I suppose;
Yet one rite we observed with care — but, no,
Although I well remember kissing Rose,
It *was n't* underneath the mistletoe.

IN THE KLONDIKE

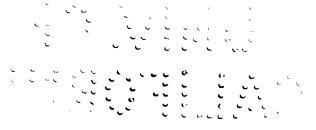
I 'M only a homeless rover
Up here in a Klondike camp;
I 've looked my possessions over
By the light of my cabin lamp.
Though I 'm an accepted lover,
I 'm miles from that sweetheart of mine,
And I 'm sore cast down,
For in Dawson town
I can't buy a valentine.

I know she 'll have roses from Harry,
A basket of Huyler's from Ned;
Beribboned carnations from Larry,
A poetic effusion from Fred;
A volume of Kipling or Barrie
From that idiot, somebody Hall,
And nothing of mine
For a valentine,
Though she loves me best of all.

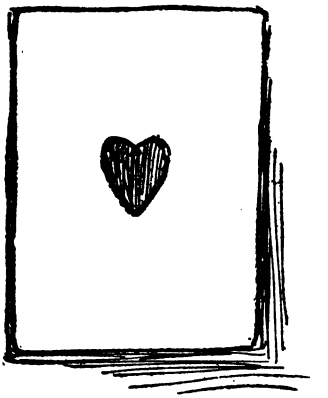




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Must my sentiment stay unspoken
Because I 've no candies or bards?
I know she 'll be just heart-broken —
Stay! here is an old pack of cards!
Not a very appropriate token,
Nor suggestive of Cupid's darts,
But I know what I 'll do
To prove I 'm true —
I 'll send her the



CELA VA SANS DIRE

I LIST to the wail of each latter-day poet
Who discovers his themes must be six months ahead;
The same dire necessity, did he but know it,
Has coerced every writer, both living and dead.

My struggles with seasons full well I remember;
I am sure I speak whereof I know when I say
That Tennyson wrote his *May Queen* in November,
And Tom Hood composed his *November* in May.

The Night before Christmas was sent to the printer,
(I'm morally sure) on the Fourth of July;
And of course *June, Dear June* was made up in the winter,
And *Spring, Gentle Spring*, when the Autumn was nigh.

The Death of the Old Year was written in Summer,
Thomson's *Seasons* were all written out of their time,
Yet these things astonish each timid newcomer
Who aims to adopt the profession of rhyme.

THE THOUGHTFUL YARD-STICK

A YARDSTICK thus to himself did muse
As he walked along the street;
"I must buy a pair and a half of shoes
Because I have three feet."

AUF WIEDERSEHEN

BENEATH the corner street-lamp's flickering glare
I stand with you, and know that we must part;
But as the last decisive moment comes,
A coward hesitation fills my heart.

I gaze once more upon your fair white face,
And see the lines my hand has written there;
And though I know you 're inwardly composed,
You 're visibly engrossed, and stamped with care.

Wrapped up in you are all my highest aims;
To you my dearest secrets I 've revealed;
To you I 've trusted, as to kindly fate;
And as I look, I know my fate is sealed.

But I am sure you will come back to me;
My fingers touch you in one last caress;
I let you go, to failure or to fame —
My carefully compounded MSS.

OF MODERN BOOKS

(A PANTOUM)

OF making many books there is no end,
 Though myriads have to deep oblivion gone;
Each day new manuscripts are being penned,
 And still the ceaseless tide of ink flows on.

Though myriads have to deep oblivion gone,
 New volumes daily issue from the press;
And still the ceaseless tide of ink flows on—
 The prospect is disheartening, I confess.

New volumes daily issue from the press;
 My pile of unread books I view aghast.
The prospect is disheartening, I confess;
 Why will these modern authors write so fast?

My pile of unread books I view aghast—
 Of course I must keep fairly up to date—
Why will these modern authors write so fast?
 They seem to get ahead of me of late.

Of course I must keep fairly up to date;
 The books of special merit I must read;
They seem to get ahead of me of late,
 Although I skim them very fast indeed.

The books of special merit I must read;
 And then the magazines come round again;
Although I skim them very fast indeed,
 I can't get through with more than eight or ten.

And then the magazines come round *again!*
 How can we stem this tide of printer's ink?
I can't get through with more than eight or ten—
 It is appalling when I stop to think.

How can we stem this tide of printer's ink?
 Of making many books there is no end.
It is appalling when I stop to think
 Each day new manuscripts are being penned!





AS through Elysian Fields I strayed,
I chanced upon a sight amazing;
In leafy shade
Where fountains played,
Old Pegasus was idly grazing.

"Why are you here, my friend?" said I.
"Of modern poets are you weary?"
He gave a sigh,
And dropped his eye,
And seemed embarrassed by my query.

Said he, "I'm treated with abuse,
I'm reckoned now among old-timers;
There's no more use
For Pegasus,
Since poets use the auto-rhymers."

THE TRAGEDY OF A THEATRE HAT

THE devil one day in a spirit of mirth
Was walking around, to and fro, on the earth,
When he heard a man say,
In a casual way,
"I think I'll drop in at to-day's matinée;
For I feel in the humour to see a good play,
And the thing is a rattler, I've heard people say."
The devil stood by,
With a smile in his eye,
And he said, "I don't see any good reason why
I, too, should n't go to this play that 's so fly."
Now, His Majesty, as is well-known by the wise,
Assumes at his will any kind of disguise;
And he said, "I will go
To this wonderful show
In the shape of a man, and arrayed *comme il faut*."
No sooner 't was said than 't was done, and away
His Majesty sped to the gay matinée.
In faultless attire becomingly garbed,
Concealing entirely his tail (which was barbed),

Correctly cravatted,
And duly silk-hatted,
With his two cloven hoofs patent-leathered and spatted,
He approached the box-office with jauntiest airs,
And purchased a seat in the orchestra chairs.
Then removing his tile,
He tripped down the aisle
With a manner which showed no appearance of guile,
Although he could scarcely conceal a slight smile
As he noticed the ladies who sat near to him,
So modishly mannered, and quite in the swim, —
The maidens so trim,
And the matrons so prim, —
And he thought how extremely they 'd be horrified
If they had any notion who sat by their side.
As His Majesty sat there enjoying it all
There entered a lady exceedingly tall;
With a rustle of silk and a flutter of fur,
She sat herself down in the seat kept for her,
Right in front of Old Nick, and exactly between
Himself and the stage. And her insolent mien
Proclaimed her at once a society queen.
Her shoulders were broad and supported a cape
Which gave you no clue to her possible shape,

'T was so plaited and quilled,
And ruffled and frilled,
And it tinkled with bugles that never were stilled;
And wide epaulettes
All covered with jets,
Caught up here and there with enormous rosettes,
And further adorned with gold-spangled aigrettes.
Encircling her neck was a boa of gauze,
Accordion-plaited, and trimmed with gewgaws;
And perched on the top of her haughty blond head
Was a HAT! Now of course you have all of you read
Of the theatre hats
That are seen at the mats.,
That are higher than steeples and broader than flats;
But this one as far outshone all of the others
As young Joseph's dream-sheaves exceeded his brothers'.
'T was a wide-rolling brim and a high-peakéd crown,
Black feathers stood up and black feathers hung down;
And black feathers waved wildly in every direction
Without any visible scheme of connection.
'T was decked with rare flowers of a marvellous size,
And colours that seemed to bedazzle the eyes;

And each vacant space
Was filled in with lace,
And twenty-three birds in the ribbons found place.
And as this arrangement quite shut off his view,
The devil was nonplussed to know what to do.
And although he is not very often amazed,
Upon this occasion he found he was fazed.
But looking around
He very soon found
That many fair ladies as gorgeously gowned,
Held their hats in their laps,
Or still better, perhaps
Had left them outside in the room with their wraps.
And assuming at once a society air,
He leaned over the back of the fair stranger's chair,
And with manner well-bred,
"Beg pardon," he said,
"Will you please take that awful thing off of your head?"
When what do you think? The lady addressed
Indignantly stared, and politely expressed
A decided refusal to grant his request!
And the poor devil sat
Behind that big hat,
So mad that he did n't know where he was at.

He could not see a thing that took place on the stage,
And he worked himself into a terrible rage.
Then he murmured quite low, —
But she heard him, you know, —
"Lady, since you refuse to remove that chapeau
You 're condemned now to wear it wherever you go.
Since you won't take it off when a duty you owe,
You shall not take it off when you wish to do so."
Alas for the lady! The devil has power,
And the rest of her life, from that terrible hour,
The curse of the devil compelled her to wear
That enormous beflowered and befeathered affair.
Her lot was a sad one. If you 'll reckon o'er
The times when a hat is a terrible bore,
You 'll certainly say
That to wear it all day
And then wear it all night is a fate to deplore.
She wore it at dinners, she wore it at balls;
She wore it at home when receiving her calls;
She wore it at breakfast, at luncheon and tea,
Not even at prayers from that hat was she free.
She could n't remove it on going to bed,
She rose, bathed, and dressed with that hat on her head.
If she lounged in the hammock, perusing a book,
Or went to the kitchen to speak to the cook,

In summer or winter, the hat was still there,
And 't was *so* in the way when she shampooed her hair.
Her lover would fain his fair sweetheart caress,
But who to his bosom could tenderly press
Twelve black, waving feathers and twenty-three birds?
He said what he thought, in appropriate words,
And broke the engagement. She vowed she would go
To a convent and bury her sorrow; but no—
They would n't receive her. It was the old tale,
That hat quite prevented her taking the veil.
The curse was upon her! No mortal could save—
She carried that ill-fated hat to her grave.

MORAL

Now, all you young women with Gainsborough hats,
Beware how you wear them to Saturday mats.
Remember the fate
Of this maid up-to-date,
And take warning from her ere it may be too late.

BALLADE OF ECCLESIASTES

BRAVELY the faithful genius toils for years,
Ambition lures him onward day by day;
At last the fruitage of his work appears,
His friends approve and critics have their say.
Men crown him with the laurel and the bay,
The guerdon of his fame is fairly won, —
And has he then performed a wonder? Nay,
That which is done is that which has been done.

The lover, tossed about 'mid hopes and fears,
To his fair goddess will insanely pray,
And begs her lovely favour when she hears
The melancholy burden of his lay.
And they assert, when she has murmured "Yea,"
Such wondrous love as theirs was known to none, —
But lovers think the selfsame things alway,
That which is done is that which has been done.

So as we follow various careers
Which offer us a choice of grave and gay,
Made up alternately of smiles and tears,
A little work and then a little play,

BALLADE OF ECCLESIASTES

As through the years we ignorantly stray,
Thinking new enterprises we 've begun,
We learn, when life is passing fast away,
That which is done is that which has been done.

L'ENVOI

Solomon, you are long since turned to clay,
But down the years your words shall ring for aye.
" There is no new thing underneath the sun,
That which is done is that which shall be done."

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